



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **DECAL and Voices for Georgia's Children Celebrate Georgia Pre-K Week and 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Georgia's Pre-K** *Nearly 150 State Leaders to Visit Pre-K Classrooms Across Georgia*

**ATLANTA, Ga., (September 28, 2012)** – Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) and Voices for Georgia's Children, a child advocacy organization, are announcing October 1-5 as Georgia Pre-K Week. The purpose is to highlight the important role Georgia's Pre-K Program plays in Georgia's education continuum and to celebrate the program's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> official year of Georgia Pre-K Week sponsored by Voices for Georgia's Children ([www.georgiavoices.com](http://www.georgiavoices.com)) and its Pre-K Week partners.

"Georgia's Pre-K Program is a direct investment in future success," said Georgia Governor Nathan Deal. "As we recognize this milestone, we also recognize that in order for Georgia to be competitive in a challenging global economy, we must have an educational system that transcends the K-12 model. Our nationally recognized Pre-K program is the first step in ensuring we have a highly educated workforce ready for the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

"Research shows that the early education of children from birth to age five proves critical to their success in kindergarten and elementary school," said DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle. "As a result, we believe investing in our youngest learners is important not only to their personal success but also to the long-term economic growth and potential of Georgia."

“Georgia’s Pre-K is an exceptional education program that serves 84,000 four year olds throughout Georgia,” said Pat Willis, Executive Director of Voices for Georgia’s Children. “Pre-K is a milestone in a child’s early education, and we are proud of Georgia’s national leadership in supporting very young children.”

Nearly 150 state officials, including Governor Nathan Deal and First Lady Sandra Deal, will visit some of the approximately 3,900 Pre-K classrooms located in all 159 Georgia counties. Governor and Mrs. Deal will visit High Point Elementary School in Sandy Springs, GA on Tuesday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> at 1:00PM to read to students. During Pre-K visits, state leaders will participate in a learning activity with the children, take a tour of the facility, talk with the staff, and get an up-close look at the ways centers support early learning.

Georgia’s Pre-K Program was created in 1992 after voters approved the creation of the Georgia Lottery for Education to support college scholarships and a voluntary prekindergarten program. In 1992 750 at-risk four year olds and their families participated in a pilot program at 20 sites. By the fall of 1995, Pre-K was opened to all eligible four-year-old children, regardless of family income, tripling its size from 15,500 children in 1994 to 44,000 in the 1995 school year. This year Georgia will invest over \$300 million to serve approximately 84,000 of the state’s youngest learners, more than 60% of all four year olds. The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) recently ranked Georgia’s Pre-K Program as one of the top state programs in the nation based on quality standards, teacher qualifications, and enrollment.

### **About Bright from the Start**

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia’s children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia’s Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers Georgia’s Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program, federal nutrition programs, and manages voluntary quality enhancement programs.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to [www.decal.ga.gov](http://www.decal.ga.gov).

### **About Voices for Georgia’s Children:**

Established in 2003, Voices for Georgia’s Children is a nonprofit child policy and advocacy organization that envisions a Georgia where children are safe, healthy, educated, employable, and connected to their family and community. It is our mission is to be a powerful, unifying voice for a public agenda that ensures the well-being of all of Georgia’s children.

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